

Middle America's 'no' to gay lifestyle falls on deaf ears

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The outcome of the gay rights debate will determine the moral course our society takes. While courts continue to legislate and government agencies continue to enact the movement's agenda in stages, the public is ensnared by ambivalence.

Last week, Hawaii's legislature moved to forestall legalization of homosexual marriage. By a vote of 39 to 12, its House of Representatives took the controversial step of defining marriage as a "union of a man and a woman."

Then — feeling p.c. conscience pangs — it negated this modest defense of Judeo-Christian ethics by authorizing a commission to suggest ways to provide homosexual couples with the legal and financial benefits of matrimony.

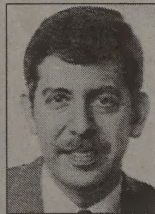
The official definition was prompted by Hawaii's Supreme Court, which has held that a ban on issuing marriage licenses to same sex couples appears to violate the state's constitution. It finds the argument that marriage is, by definition, the joining of a man and a woman to be "circular and unpersuasive."

The legislature hopes that by extending matrimonial benefits to homosexual liaisons (while withholding the magic words I-now-pronounce-you) it will placate judicial autocrats.

Nowhere is the public more capricious than in its response to gay rights. Activists are quick to exploit these inconsistencies. In a 1992 Newsweek poll, 78 percent said gays should be pro-

tected from job discrimination. Substantial majorities supported health insurance and inheritance rights for gay lovers.

But the same survey showed 58 percent opposed to legally sanctioned gay marriage (only 35 percent in favor). In



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a 1994 Newsweek poll, 65 percent rejected adoption rights for gay partners. In another survey, 71 percent disapproved of teaching school children "that homosexual behavior is normal."

Yet a willingness to view homosexual demands from a civil rights perspective has given the movement the leverage to advance those aspects of its agenda the public abhors.

New York City is one of 25 municipalities allowing the registration of "domestic partners," homosexual and heterosexual. Parties thus enrolled are entitled to marital status for family leave, visitation rights in municipal hospitals and application of housing laws.

Only New Hampshire and Florida have outright bans on homosexual adoption. Nearly a dozen states permit a lesbian to adopt her lover's child. And last year, Washington state placed a 3-year-old boy with two homosexual men

as a prelude to adoption. Other states have regulations that bar discrimination against gays in foster parenting.

On Valentine's Day, a group calling itself the Lesbian Avengers, and wearing T-shirts emblazoned "We Recruit," invaded a Springfield, Mass., elementary school. The avengers handed out candy and literature which explained that "Women who love women are OK" and listed the number of a hotline providing "explicit messages, one-on-one service and . . . hot, uncensored gay phone sex."

Elsewhere in the Bay State, the recommendations of the Governor's Commission On Gay and Lesbian Youth are being implemented. In the name of promoting tolerance, students are taught to accept homosexuality. The commission suggested students "be introduced to lesbian and gay culture in a variety of contexts, such as literature, history, the arts and family life."

In Brookline, Mass., this takes the form of health classes taught by gay students, a transsexual lecturing a grade-school class and schools encouraging students and faculty to display pink-triangle stickers indicating an area is "a safe place for talking about . . . issues related to sexual orientation."

In New York City, the Gay Men's Health Crisis held a February forum for high school peer leaders, co-sponsored by the board of education. Children as young as 12 were instructed in hazard-

ous-sex techniques like lesbian fisting, whips, sex toys and other paraphernalia, and practices even weirder and more revolting.

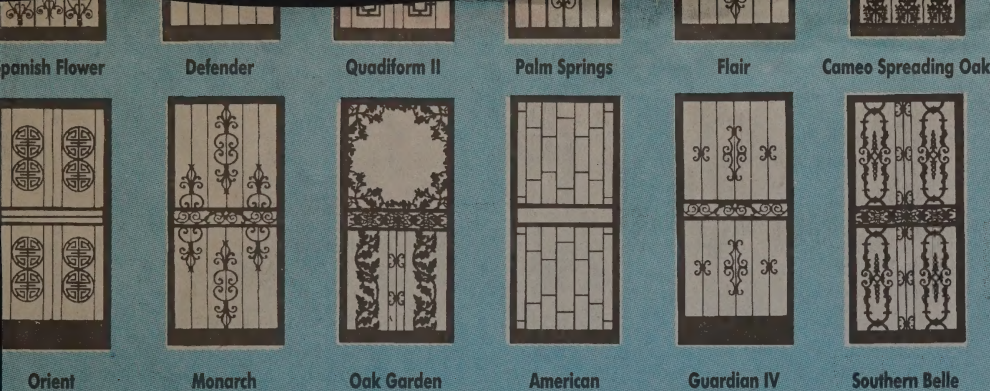
Middle America has said no to gay marriage, adoption and public school propaganda/proselytizing in tones of ringing clarity. They might as well have saved their breath, for all the good it's done.

By acquiescing to the movement's underlying principles, the public has paved the way for its ultimate triumph. "In any campaign to win over the public, gays must be cast as victims in need of protection so that straights will be inclined by reflex to assume the role of protector," urged a 1987 article in Guide, a homosexual magazine.

This strategy has succeeded brilliantly. "We can't help ourselves," activists insist. "This is the way we are. Understand us. Accept us. Oppose vile discrimination against us. Anything less is homophobia. And you don't want to be a Nazi-skinhead-hatemonger, do you?"

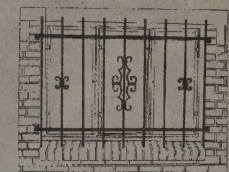
We fell for it. Once these premises were accepted — once immutability was admitted and minority status granted — everything else followed naturally, including policies the public detests. Once we came to see homosexuality not as sin or perversion or abnormality, but merely as a difference (like race or gender) we were undone.

Feder is a columnist for the Boston Herald.



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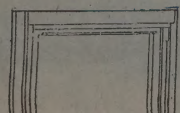
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